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AVENGERS THE INITIATIVE

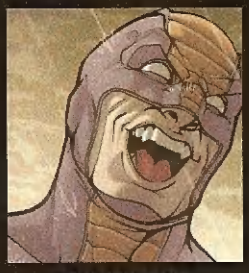
AFTER STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT WAS DESTROYED DURING A TELEVISED FIGHT BETWEEN THE NEW WARRIORS AND A GROUP OF DANGEROUS VILLAINS, A FEDERAL SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT WAS PASSED. ALL INDIVIDUALS POSSESSING PARANORMAL ABILITIES MUST NOW REGISTER WITH THE GOVERNMENT. TONY STARK, A.K.A. IRON MAN, HAS BEEN APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF S.H.I.E.L.D., THE INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCE. HE HAS SET IN MOTION THE INITIATIVE, A PLAN FOR TRAINING AND POLICING SUPER HEROES IN THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD, INTENDED TO POSITION A LOCAL SUPER HERO TEAM IN EACH OF AMERICA'S FIFTY STATES.

STAFF

YELLOWJACKET

WAR MACHINE

TASKMASTER



CONSTRICTOR

TRAINEES

PRODIGY

ANNEX

GORILLA GIRL

BATWING

SUNSTREAK

EMERY SCHAUB

Drawing from the ranks of newly registered superhumans, Camp Hammond continues to welcome new classes of recruits...with varying degrees of success...

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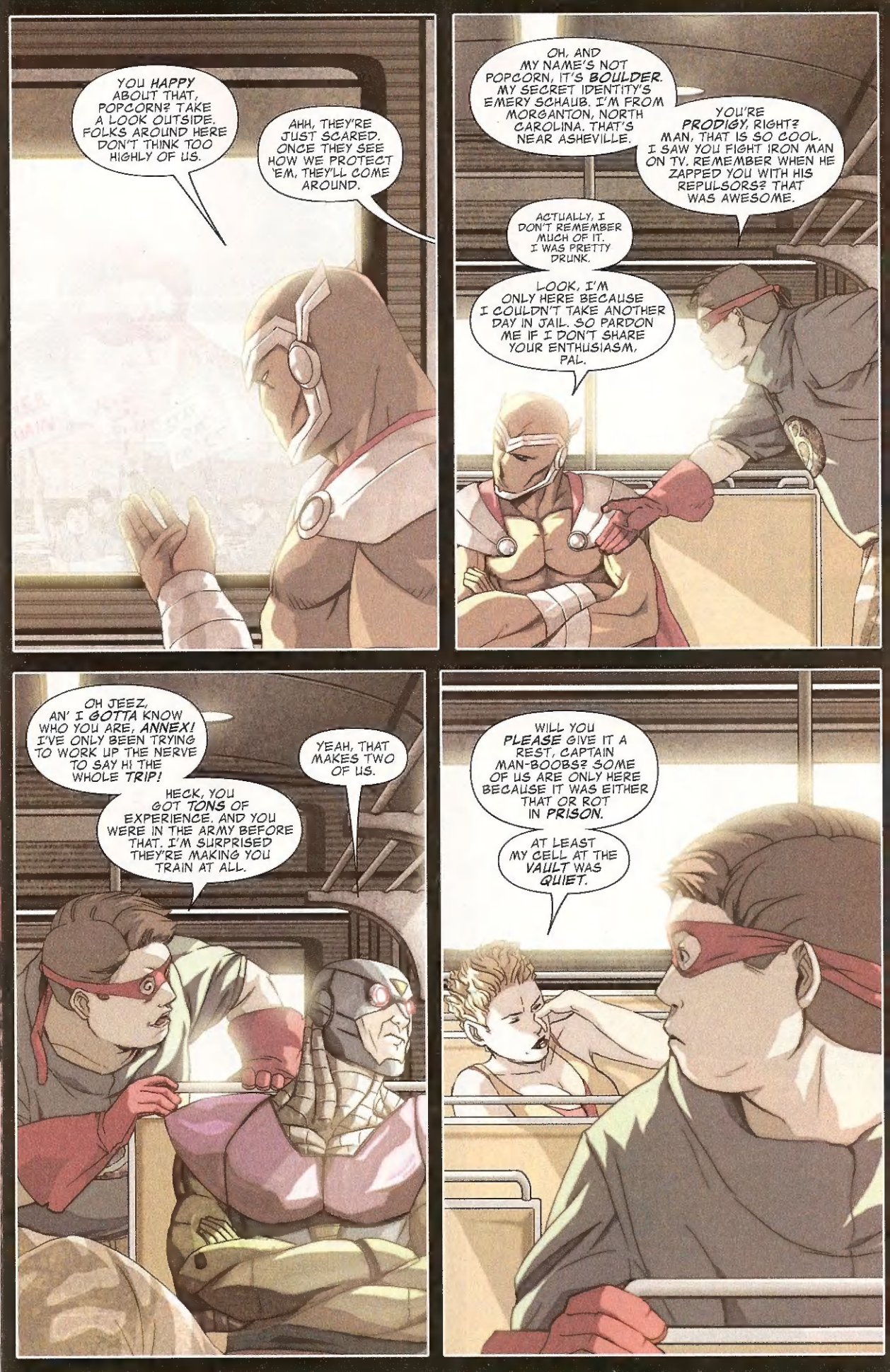
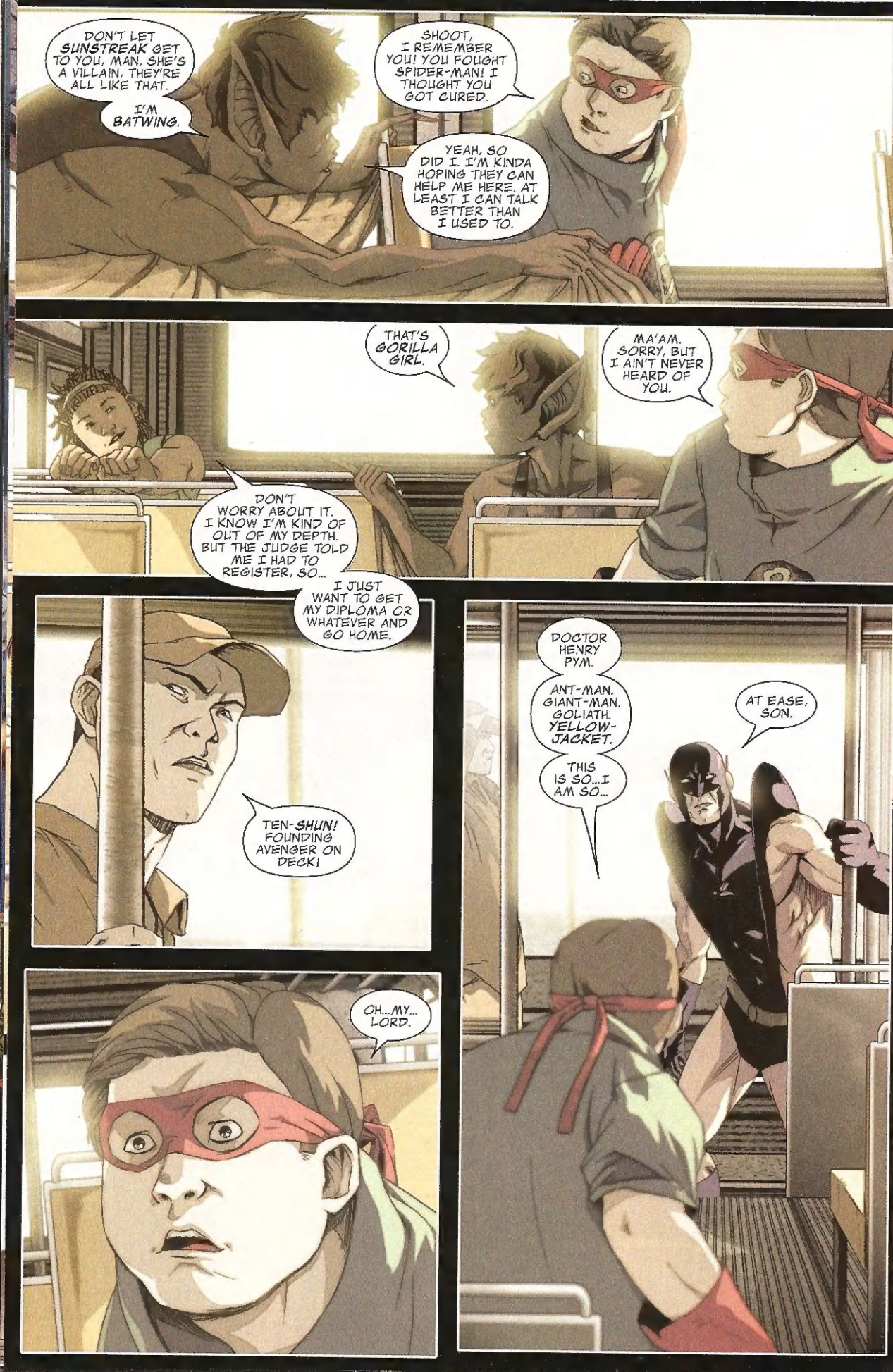
OMIGOD, I JUST SAW THE SIGN.
"ENTERING CAMP HAMMOND." WE'RE ACTUALLY HERE.
WE'RE GONNA BE PART OF THE INITIATIVE!
NO STANDING IN THE AISLES!

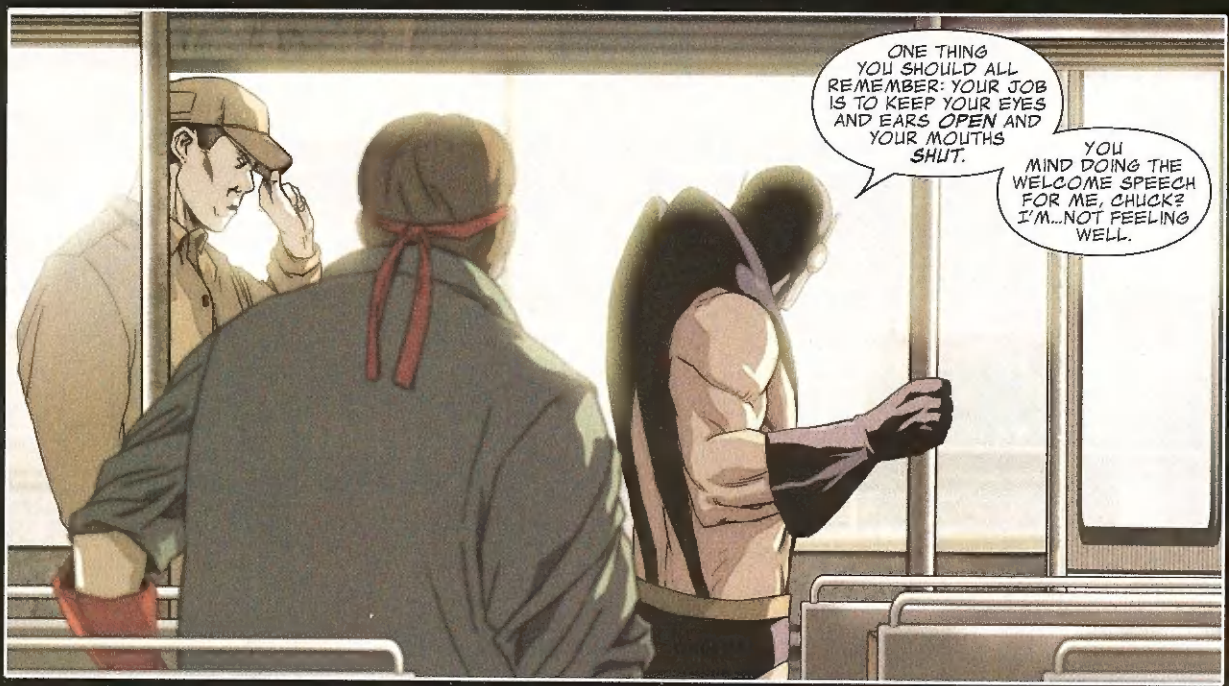

YOU HAPPY ABOUT THAT, POPCORN? TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE. FOLKS AROUND HERE DON'T THINK TOO HIGHLY OF US.
AHH, THEY'RE JUST SCARED. ONCE THEY SEE HOW WE PROTECT 'EM, THEY'LL COME AROUND.
OH, AND MY NAME'S NOT POPCORN, IT'S BOULDER. MY SECRET IDENTITY'S EMERY SCHAUB. I'M FROM MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA. THAT'S NEAR ASHEVILLE.
YOU'RE PRODIGY, RIGHT? MAN, THAT IS SO COOL. I SAW YOU FIGHT IRON MAN ON TV. REMEMBER WHEN HE ZAPPED YOU WITH HIS REPULSORS? THAT WAS AWESOME.
ACTUALLY, I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH OF IT. I WAS PRETTY DRUNK.
LOOK, I'M ONLY HERE BECAUSE I COULDN'T TAKE ANOTHER DAY IN JAIL. SO PARDON ME IF I DON'T SHARE YOUR ENTHUSIASM, PAL.
OH JEEZ, AN' I GOTTA KNOW WHO YOU ARE, ANNEX! I'VE ONLY BEEN TRYING TO WORK UP THE NERVE TO SAY HI THE WHOLE TRIP!
HECK, YOU GOT TONS OF EXPERIENCE. AND YOU WERE IN THE ARMY BEFORE THAT. I'M SURPRISED THEY'RE MAKING YOU TRAIN AT ALL.
YEAH, THAT MAKES TWO OF US.
WILL YOU PLEASE GIVE IT A REST, CAPTAIN MAN-BOOBS? SOME OF US ARE ONLY HERE BECAUSE IT WAS EITHER THAT OR ROT IN PRISON.
AT LEAST MY CELL AT THE VAULT WAS QUIET.


DON'T LET SUNSTREAK GET TO YOU, MAN. SHE'S A VILLAIN, THEY'RE ALL LIKE THAT.
I'M BATWING.
SHOOT, I REMEMBER YOU! YOU FOUGHT SPIDER-MAN! I THOUGHT YOU GOT CURED.
YEAH, SO DID I. I'M KINDA HOPING THEY CAN HELP ME HERE. AT LEAST I CAN TALK BETTER THAN I USED TO.
THAT'S GORILLA GIRL.
MA'AM. SORRY, BUT I AIN'T NEVER HEARD OF YOU.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I KNOW I'M KIND OF OUT OF MY DEPTH. BUT THE JUDGE TOLD ME I HAD TO REGISTER, SO...
I JUST WANT TO GET MY DIPLOMA OR WHATEVER AND GO HOME.
TEN-SHUN! FOUNDING AVENGER ON DECK!
OH...MY... LORD.
DOCTOR HENRY PYM.
ANT-MAN. GIANT-MAN. GOLIATH. YELLOW-JACKET.
THIS IS SO...I AM SO...
AT EASE, SON.

AW, HECK... I MEAN...YOU WERE ONE OF THE FIRST GREAT MODERN HEROES. YOU HELPED FOUND THE AVENGERS!
:COUGH:WIFEBEATER.
YOU FOUGHT DR. DOOM, YOU FOUGHT THE HULK. YOU DISCOVERED PYM PARTICLES. YOU SAVED THE PRESIDENT FROM HYDRA! YOU'RE A LEGEND!

THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK YOU.
THAT'S ENOUGH, KID, THIS AIN'T NO FAN CLUB.
IT'S OKAY, CHUCK. ASK AWAY, YOUNG MAN.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE, BEING THE ONE TO PULL CAPTAIN AMERICA OUT OF THE ICE?


ONE THING YOU SHOULD ALL REMEMBER: YOUR JOB IS TO KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN AND YOUR MOUTHS SHUT.
YOU MIND DOING THE WELCOME SPEECH FOR ME, CHUCK? I'M...NOT FEELING WELL.

WHAT'D I SAY?
DUDE, THINK ABOUT IT. OF ALL THE POSSIBLE TOUCHY SUBJECTS--
ALL RIGHT, YOU WALKING WASTES OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS...
...FALL IN!
I'M THE TASKMASTER. AND I WILL BE YOUR DRILL INSTRUCTOR.
OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, YOU'LL GO FROM HATING ME TO DESPISING ME TO LOATHING ME. I'LL GO FROM NOT CARING TO NOT GIVING A DAMN TO ENJOYING IT.
THE LAST GUY WHO DID THIS JOB WAS STRAIGHT-UP MILITARY--THE YELLING AND THE SCREAMING AND THE WHOLE "FULL METAL JACKET" THING. THAT AIN'T ME.
HERE'S MY WAY: YOU DO EXACTLY WHAT I SAY EXACTLY WHEN I SAY OR I MAKE YOU HURT UNTIL YOU DO. IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
SIR, YES SIR!
YOU. WHAT'S YOUR CODE NAME?
BO--
WRONG!
YOU HAVE TO EARN THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE YOUR CODE NAME. UNTIL THEN, I PICK IT.
LET'S SEE... WHAT'S A GOOD ONE FOR YOU... AHA! GOT IT.
WELCOME TO THE INITIATIVE, BUTTERBALL.
ALL RIGHT, FORM UP. TEN MILE RUN.

The Observation Deck.
A Week Later.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE LATEST BATCH?
NOT MUCH. THEY'RE Z-LIST, THE LOT OF 'EM. ANNEX HAS PROMISE, BUT HE THINKS HE ALREADY KNOWS EVERYTHING, WHICH MAKES HIM AN IDIOT.
ARE THE SCHAUB BOY'S POWERS REALLY AS DESCRIBED IN HIS FILE?
"SEE FOR YOURSELF. I BORROWED THE CONSTRICTOR TO SEE HOW HE HANDLES ELECTRICITY. THAT'S ENOUGH JUICE TO FRY A RHINO; BUTTERBALL DOESN'T EVEN BLINK.
"HE CAN'T BE SHOT, STABBED, POISONED, DROWNED, SUFFOCATED, OR HARMED IN ANY OTHER CONVENTIONAL WAY WE CAN FIGURE.
"CAN'T EVEN BE HURT BY MENTAL ATTACKS...ALTHOUGH A TELEPATH COULD STILL CONTROL HIS MIND."
'COURSE, GIVE ME SOMETHING SHINY, AND SO CAN I. THE KID'S NOT A ROCKET SCIENTIST.
IF HE'S INDESTRUCTIBLE, HE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE.
I CONCUR WITH WAR MACHINE. IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S MORE OF A BRUISER TYPE.
YOU'D THINK SO. THE THING IS...
"...HE'S NOT STRONG. HE'S NOT FAST. AND EVEN IF HE WASN'T BUILT LIKE A TUB OF PUDDING...
"...HE'D STILL BE A KLUTZ"
WHUMP
"WELL, BEFORE HE CAME HERE HE WAS A FRY COOK, NOT A NINJA. IT'S OUR JOB TO WHIP HIM INTO SHAPE."
"BELIEVE ME, I BEEN TRYING.

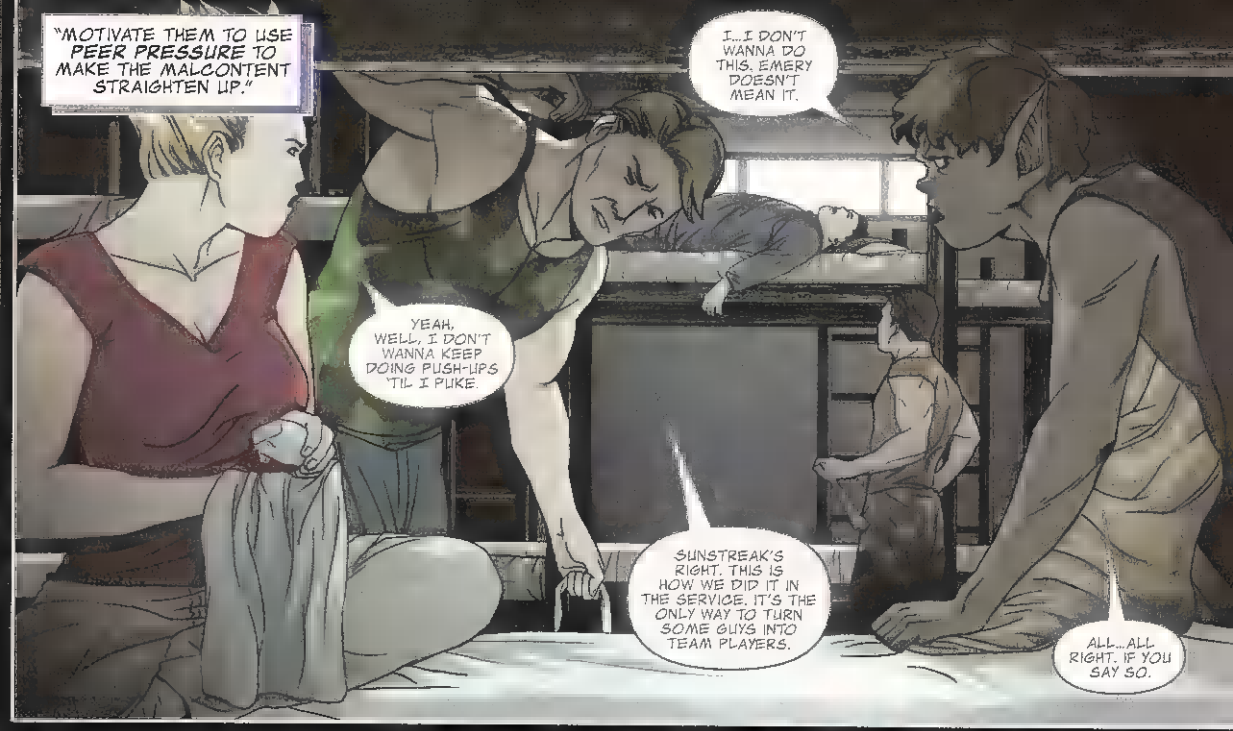
"HE DOESN'T GET TIRED. HE CAN RUN ALL DAY WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT... AT A SNAIL'S PACE, BUT HE CAN DO IT.
"SAME WITH WEIGHTLIFTING. ANYTHING REMOTELY HEAVY HE CAN'T BUDGE AT ALL, BUT HE CAN LIFT LIGHTER WEIGHTS 'TIL THE COWS COME HOME.
"HE'S NOT LOSING ANY FAT, AND HE'S NOT GETTING ANY STRONGER."

I HAVE A THEORY ABOUT THAT.
A SIDE EFFECT OF HIS INVULNERABILITY IS THAT HIS BODY DOESN'T CHANGE. HIS METABOLISM DOESN'T FUNCTION LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN'S.
EXERCISE WON'T HAVE ANY EFFECT. IN ESSENCE, THIS BOY IS "FROZEN" IN THE STATE HE WAS IN WHEN HIS POWERS ACTIVATED.

IN OTHER WORDS, HE'S A FAT WIMP FOREVER.
WELL, HE EATS...SO A NEAR-STARVATION DIET MIGHT CAUSE HIM TO LOSE WEIGHT. IN TWO OR THREE YEARS.
I GET THE FEELING THERE'S SOMETHING MORE BOTHERING YOU, TASKMASTER. IS HE A DISCIPLINE PROBLEM?

"OH, DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED."
DON'T LET GO OF THE ARROW; JUST RELAX YOUR HAND. ANY QUESTIONS?
I HAVE ONE, MR. TASKMASTER, SIR.
SSTHUNK

I READ ON THE INTERNET THAT YOU ONLY HAVE TO SEE SOMETHING DONE ONCE, AND YOU CAN ALL OF A SUDDEN DO IT YOURSELF.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TRAIN OR PRACTICE OR ANYTHING?
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S CALLED HAVING "PHOTOGRAPHIC REFLEXES." I CAN SHOOT LIKE HAWKEYE, FIGHT LIKE IRON FIST, FENCE LIKE THE BLACK KNIGHT.
NOPE. THERE A POINT TO THIS, BUTTERBALL?
SO, UM... THEN WHAT QUALIFIES YOU TO TEACH US HOW TO PRACTICE?
"I CAN'T PUNISH HIM BY MAKING HIM RUN LAPS, OR DO PUSH-UPS IN THE RAIN, OR ANY OF THE OTHER USUAL TRICKS.
"NORMALLY WHAT YOU DO IN THAT SITUATION IS PUNISH THE OTHERS.


"MOTIVATE THEM TO USE PEER PRESSURE TO MAKE THE MALCONTENT STRAIGHTEN UP."
I...I DON'T WANNA DO THIS. EMERY DOESN'T MEAN IT.
YEAH, WELL, I DON'T WANNA KEEP DOING PUSH-UPS 'TIL I PUKE.
SUNSTREAK'S RIGHT. THIS IS HOW WE DID IT IN THE SERVICE. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO TURN SOME GUYS INTO TEAM PLAYERS.
ALL...ALL RIGHT. IF YOU SAY SO.

GOOD. OKAY, ON THREE. ONE...TWO...

THREE!
WHAP WHAP WHAP

SNXXXX

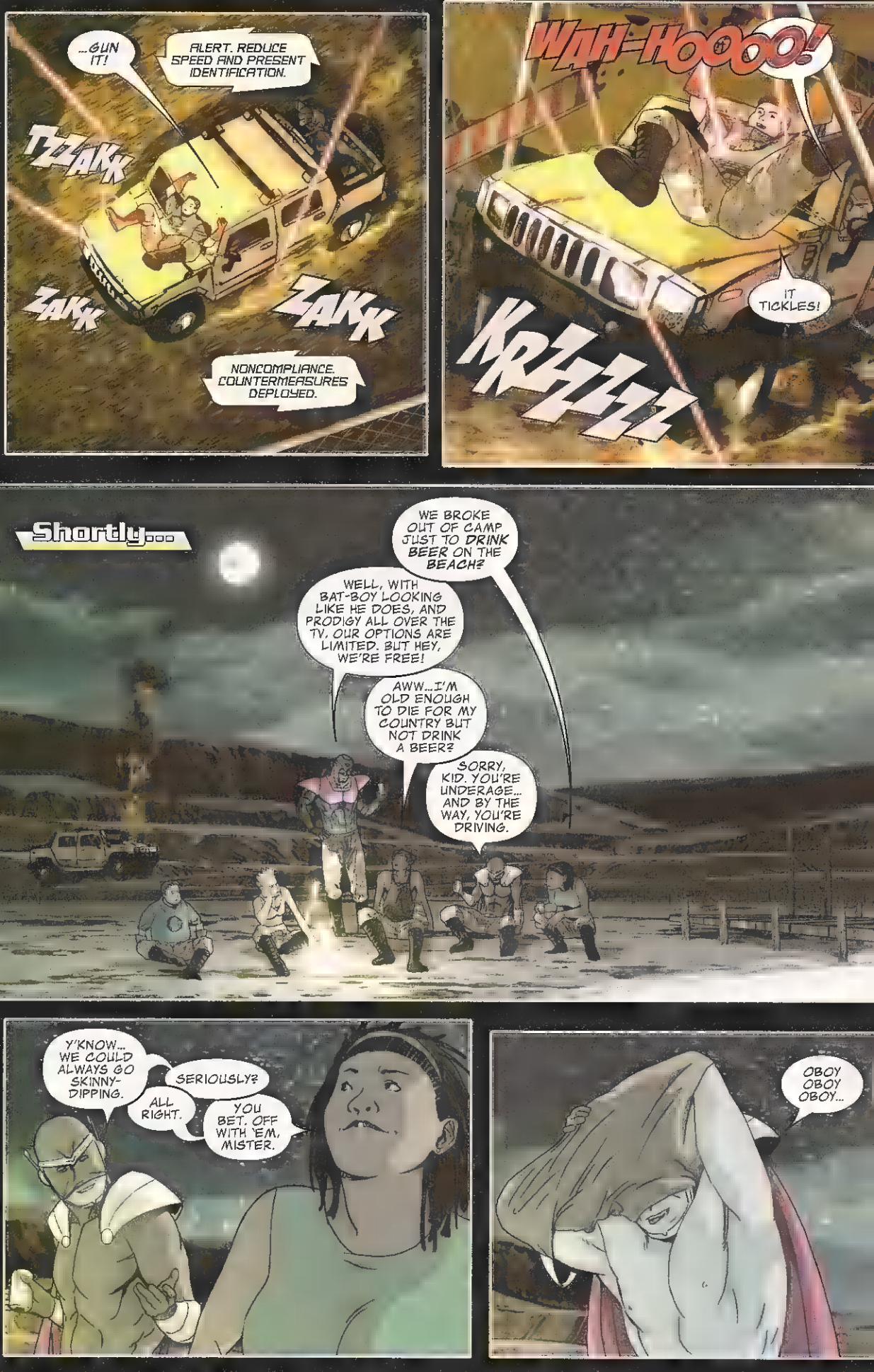
"BUT WE RAN INTO PROBLEMS THERE, TOO.

"I'M TELLIN' YA, NOTHING GETS TO THIS KID."
I'M SURE IT'S FRUSTRATING. BUT INVULNERABILITY IS TOO VALUABLE A POWER TO GO TO WASTE.
STUDY FOOTAGE OF FAT GUYS FIGHTING--THE KINGPIN, THE BLOB, SUMO WRESTLERS--AND APPLY THE TECHNIQUES TO SCHAUB.
BUT THOSE GUYS ARE ALL STRONG--
ARE YOU ADMITTING FAILURE, TASKMASTER?
NO. SIR.
GOOD. NOW ON TO OTHER MATTERS. S.H.I.E.L.D. PICKED UP INTEL THAT THERE'S A CONTRACT OUT ON YOU. RETRIBUTION FOR COLLABORATING WITH THE ENEMY, AS IT WERE.
WE'LL INCREASE YOUR SECURITY, BUT I WANTED YOU TO KNOW. BE EXTRA CAREFUL.
YOU DON'T SEEM ESPECIALLY CONCERNED.
I'M NOT.
MIND TELLING US WHY?
'CAUSE BULLSEYE'S WITH THE THUNDERBOLTS...I HEAR ELEKTRA'S DEAD...AGAIN...
...AND THEY CAN'T SEND ME AFTER MYSELF.
UH...ALL RIGHT.
JIM, IF YOU HAVE A MINUTE, I'D LIKE TO GO OVER PREPARATIONS FOR PRODIGY'S PRESS CONFERENCE.
I WANT TO MAKE SURE HE WON'T BE TEMPTED TO TRY ANYTHING RASH...

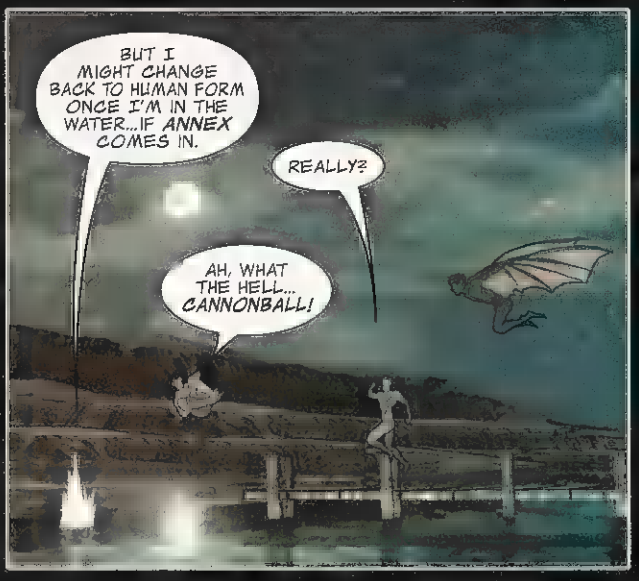
"...SINCE THAT SEEMS TO BE HIS SPECIALTY."
THAT IMAGE YOU SEE BEHIND ME ISN'T ME. IT'S NOT WHO I AM.
I...HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM. AS YOU CAN SEE, I WAS INTOXICATED WHEN I VIOLATED THE REGISTRATION ACT AND FOUGHT IRON MAN.
BUT I'VE GOTTEN HELP, THANKS TO THE GOOD PEOPLE HERE AT THE INITIATIVE. AND NOW I'M... PROUD...TO HAVE A CHANCE TO REDEEM MYSELF.
SALLY FLOYD, FRONTLINE. ARE YOU SAYING YOU WEREN'T ACTUALLY OPPOSED TO THE REGISTRATION ACT?
I HAD... CONCERNS. BUT INSTEAD OF TALKING THEM OUT, INSTEAD OF GIVING SOMEONE LIKE IRON MAN OR DR. PYM HERE A CHANCE TO ADDRESS THEM...
...I DEALT WITH IT INAPPROPRIATELY. BY DRINKING AND ACTING OUT.
AS MR. STARK POINTED OUT TO ME, I COULD HAVE INJURED SOMEONE IN MY IMPAIRED STATE. AND FOR THAT I AM TRULY, GENUINELY SORRY.
FOLLOW-UP... IS YOUR PRESENCE HERE, AS SOME HAVE SUGGESTED, JUST A WAY TO GET OUT OF PRISON? OR HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND ABOUT THE REGISTRATION ACT?
I COMPLETELY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY SUPPORT THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT.

COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN LESS CONVINCING? I CAN JUST IMAGINE WHAT JON STEWART'S GOING TO DO WITH THAT SOUND-BITE.
LAY OFF ME, DAMN IT! I DID EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANTED.
I GOT UP THERE AND CONFESSED TO A DRINKING PROBLEM I DON'T HAVE--
--WON'T ADMIT TO YOURSELF--
--AND SOLD EVERYBODY AND EVERYTHING I FOUGHT FOR IN THE CIVIL WAR DOWN THE RIVER LIKE A GOOD LITTLE SELLOUT!
PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO FOUGHT ON YOUR SIDE HAVE ACCEPTED REGISTRATION. NO ONE ASKED YOU TO SELL OUT.
THAT'S CRAP! YOU WANTED TO PARADE ME IN FRONT OF THE REPORTERS AS A TEAM PLAYER 'CAUSE I WAS ONE OF THE MOST VISIBLE SYMBOLS OF THE RESISTANCE!
YOU HAD ME BY THE SHORT HAIRS AND YOU USED IT TO FORCE ME TO DANCE TO YOUR TUNE!
WE OFFERED YOU THE SAME CHANCE WE'VE OFFERED DOZENS OF OTHERS. NO ONE COERCED YOU INTO TAKING IT.
IF YOU FELT SO STRONGLY ABOUT THIS, YOU COULD ALWAYS HAVE STAYED IN PRISON. WITH THOSE WHO REFUSED TO COMPROMISE THEIR BELIEFS.
I'LL LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THAT ONCE. BUT NEXT TIME--
AHH, GO RIDE AN ANT.

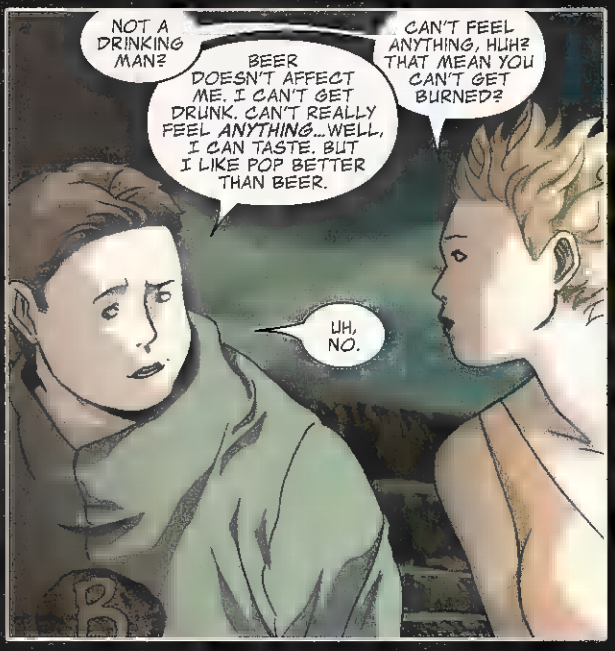
WHAT STATE YOU WANNA GO TO WHEN YOU GRADUATE? I'D KINDA LIKE TO BE NEAR MY MOMMA, BUT SHOOT, NEW YORK WOULD BE NEAT. THAT'S WHERE ALL THE BEST FIGHTS ARE.
SUNSTREAK, CAN YOU PLEASE STOP SETTING YOUR CARDS ON FIRE? WEAR SOME ASBESTOS GLOVES OR SOMETHING?
RIGHT, AND GET CANCER. YOU'D LOVE THAT.
MAN, IT'S DEAD AROUND HERE TONIGHT. THE UPPERCLASSMEN ARE SO LUCKY, GETTING A FIELD TRIP TO AVENGERS TOWER.
I WISH WE COULD GO SOMEWHERE. I'M SICK OF THIS PLACE.
THAT'S IT!
...AND I SURE DO MISS MY CAT, SAM. SPEEDBALL HAD A CAT WITH THE SAME POWERS AS HIM. SAM DOESN'T HAVE POWERS, BUT HE CAN OPEN DOORS...
YOU GUYS EVER SEE "STRIPES"? PUT ON YOUR BEST CAMO PANTS, KIDS...
...BECAUSE WE ARE GOING OUT ON THE TOWN TONIGHT!
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, PRODIGY. WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO LEAVE BASE WITHOUT PERMISSION.
C'MON, EMERY. I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO BE ONE OF THE GUYS.
I DO, BUT I DON'T WANT TO GET IN TROUBLE.
ANNEX IS JAMMING THE SECURITY CAMERAS. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS MAKE SURE WE DON'T GET CAUGHT.
UM, THEY'VE GOT A LOT MORE THAN CAMERAS FOR SECURITY HERE, PRODIGY...
FORTUNATELY, I HAVE A WELL THOUGHT OUT PLAN TO GET AROUND IT. PHASE ONE: EVERYBODY GET BEHIND BUTTERBALL. PHASE TWO...

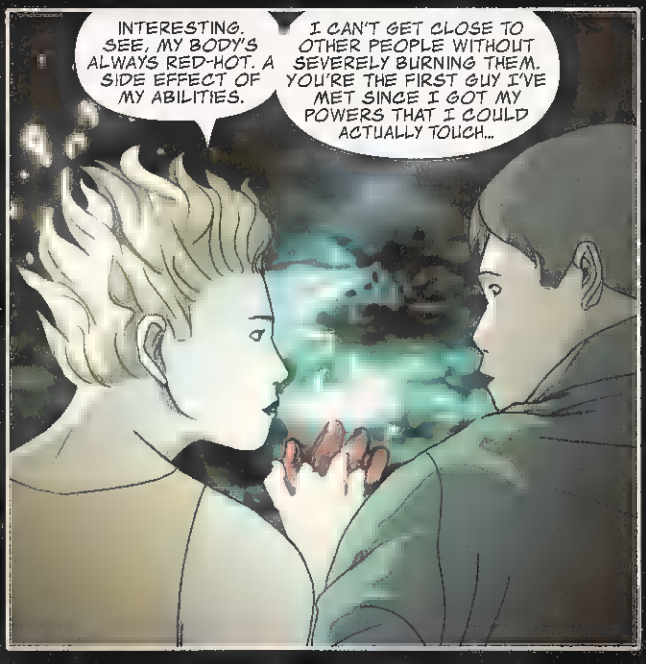

...GUN IT!
ALERT. REDUCE SPEED AND PRESENT IDENTIFICATION.
TZZAKK
ZAKK
ZAKK
NONCOMPLIANCE. COUNTERMEASURES DEPLOYED.
WAH-HOOOO!
IT TICKLES!
KRZZZZ
Shortly...
WE BROKE OUT OF CAMP JUST TO DRINK BEER ON THE BEACH?
WELL, WITH BAT-BOY LOOKING LIKE HE DOES, AND PRODIGY ALL OVER THE TV, OUR OPTIONS ARE LIMITED. BUT HEY, WE'RE FREE!
AWW...I'M OLD ENOUGH TO DIE FOR MY COUNTRY BUT NOT DRINK A BEER?
SORRY, KID. YOU'RE UNDERAGE... AND BY THE WAY, YOU'RE DRIVING.
Y'KNOW... WE COULD ALWAYS GO SKINNY-DIPPING.
SERIOUSLY?
ALL RIGHT.
YOU BET. OFF WITH 'EM, MISTER.
OBOY OBOY OBOY...

HEY!
I ASSURE YOU, I'M COMPLETELY NAKED.

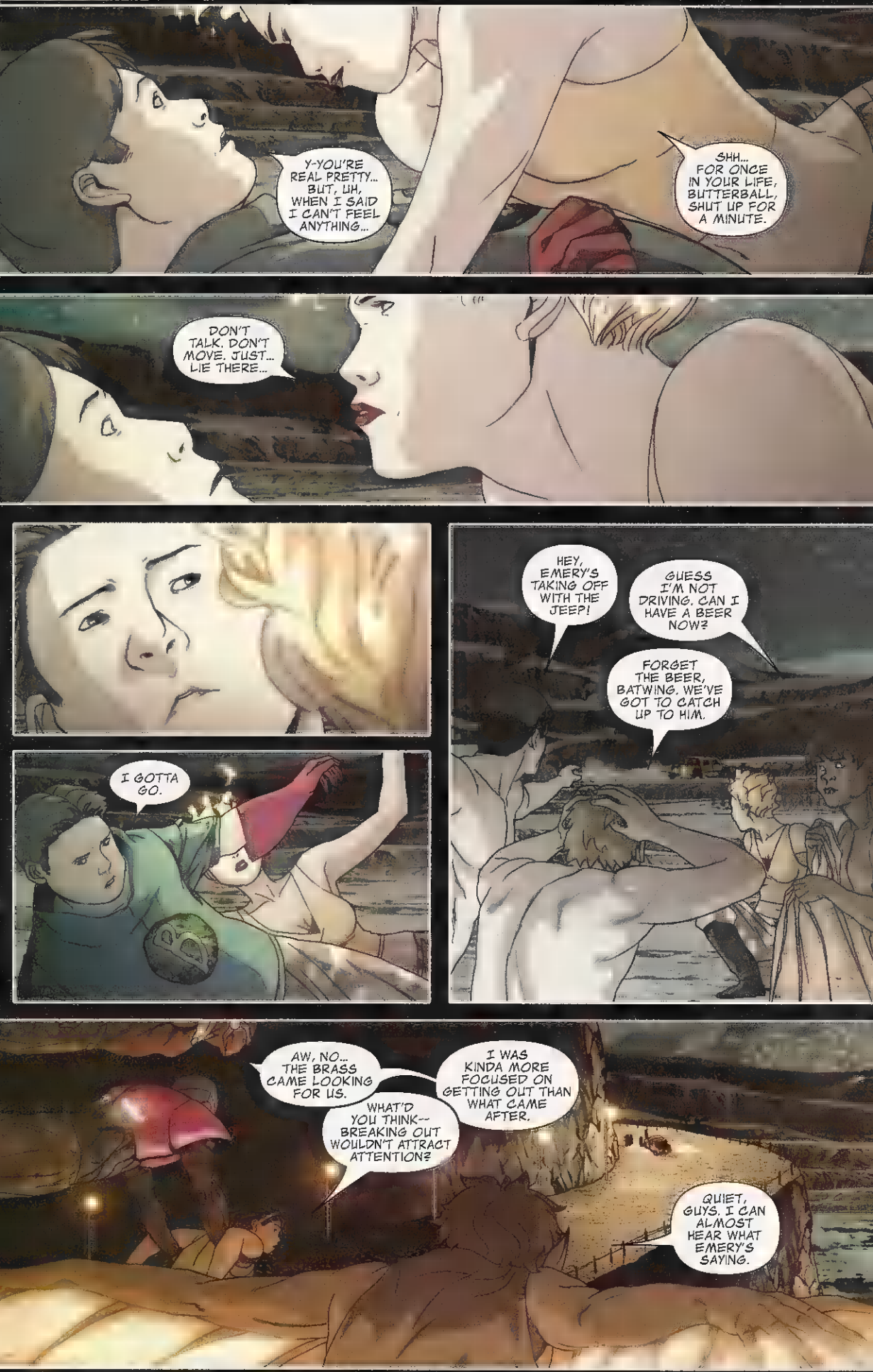

BUT I MIGHT CHANGE BACK TO HUMAN FORM ONCE I'M IN THE WATER...IF *ANNEX* COMES IN.
REALLY?
AH, WHAT THE HELL... *CANNONBALL!*

NOT GOING IN?
I, UH, CAN'T SWIM.
CAN'T DROWN, EITHER.
I THINK I'LL JUST STAY HERE.


NOT A DRINKING MAN?
BEER DOESN'T AFFECT ME. I CAN'T GET DRUNK. CAN'T REALLY FEEL *ANYTHING*...WELL, I CAN TASTE. BUT I LIKE POP BETTER THAN BEER.
CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING, HUH? THAT MEAN YOU CAN'T GET BURNED?
UH, NO.


INTERESTING. SEE, MY BODY'S ALWAYS RED-HOT. A SIDE EFFECT OF MY ABILITIES.
I CAN'T GET CLOSE TO OTHER PEOPLE WITHOUT SEVERELY BURNING THEM. YOU'RE THE FIRST GUY I'VE MET SINCE I GOT MY POWERS THAT I COULD ACTUALLY TOUCH...

...ACTUALLY KISS...


Y-YOU'RE REAL PRETTY... BUT, UH, WHEN I SAID I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING...
SHH... FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE, BUTTERBALL, SHUT UP FOR A MINUTE.
DON'T TALK. DON'T MOVE. JUST... LIE THERE...
I GOTTA GO.
HEY, EMERY'S TAKING OFF WITH THE JEEP!
GUESS I'M NOT DRIVING. CAN I HAVE A BEER NOW?
FORGET THE BEER, BATWING. WE'VE GOT TO CATCH UP TO HIM.
AW, NO... THE BRASS CAME LOOKING FOR US.
I WAS KINDA MORE FOCUSED ON GETTING OUT THAN WHAT CAME AFTER.
WHAT'D YOU THINK-- BREAKING OUT WOULDN'T ATTRACT ATTENTION?
QUIET, GUYS. I CAN ALMOST HEAR WHAT EMERY'S SAYING.

WHY'D YOU DO IT, EMERY?
I WAS HUNGRY. Y'ALL AIN'T BEEN LETTING ME EAT ANYTHING BUT VEGETABLES AND TOFU, AND I JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT NO MORE.
CONSTRICTOR SAW YOU RIDING ON THE HOOD OF THE JEEP. YOU DIDN'T DO THIS ALONE.
I HELD DOWN THE GAS PEDAL WITH A CINDERBLOCK, SIR. IT WAS JUST ME.
WOW. DO I FEEL LIKE A JACKASS.
YEAH, THE KID MANNED UP, BUT IT WON'T MEAN SQUAT IF WE'RE NOT BACK AT THE BARRACKS FOR BED CHECK, SO LET'S--
BA-WHOOOM
AH...HOW CONVENIENT.
OUR TARGET LEFT THE BASE TO MEET US. ISN'T THAT CONSIDERATE, MR. HYDE?
VERY CIVILIZED OF HIM, COBRA.
THAT'S KING COBRA, IDIOT!
HEY, MAULER--A C-NOTE SAYS THESE TWO CAN'T WASTE THE TASKMASTER WITHOUT TRYIN' TO KILL EACH OTHER FIRST.
NO BET, FIREBRAND.

NOW LET'S GET 'EM!
BRING IT ON, LOSERS!
WHOA.
DON'T WORRY, SIR. WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK!
ANNEX, NO!
YOU'RE NOWHERE NEAR READY FOR--
--THIS.
BTAMMM
OH GOD.
THANK YOU, MY DEAR. THOSE FLAMES DIDN'T HURT, BUT THEY MADE ME RED-HOT... AS YELLOWJACKET CAN ATTEST!
SSSSS
NGAHH!

GET... GHH...
KRAMM
...OFF!
HYDE! COBRA, HE'S DOWN!
DAMN IT, WE'RE TOO HEAVILY OUTNUMBERED. THEY'LL HAVE BACKUP HERE SOON--WE HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR THIS NONSENSE. MAULER--THE FAT ONE!
ALL RIGHT--EVERYONE STAND DOWN OR I BLAST THE FAT KID'S HEAD OFF.
FIREBRAND, KILL TASKMASTER. ANYONE ELSE MOVES, AND THE KID DIES.
DID YOU HEAR ME? DROP YOUR WEAPONS OR--
SHZAKKKK
OUCH.

HOLY--!
THE YOUTH IS INVULNERABLE!

RETREAT! FOLLOW THE ESCAPE PLAN!
I'LL GO AFTER THEM.

HE CAN'T CATCH THEM ALL. I'LL HELP--
NO. STAMFORD IS THE LAST PLACE WE NEED UNTRAINED SUPERHUMANS CHASING DOWN VILLAINS.
THE S.H.I.E.L.D. CAPEKILLERS WILL BE HERE SOON; THEY'LL TAKE UP THE HUNT.

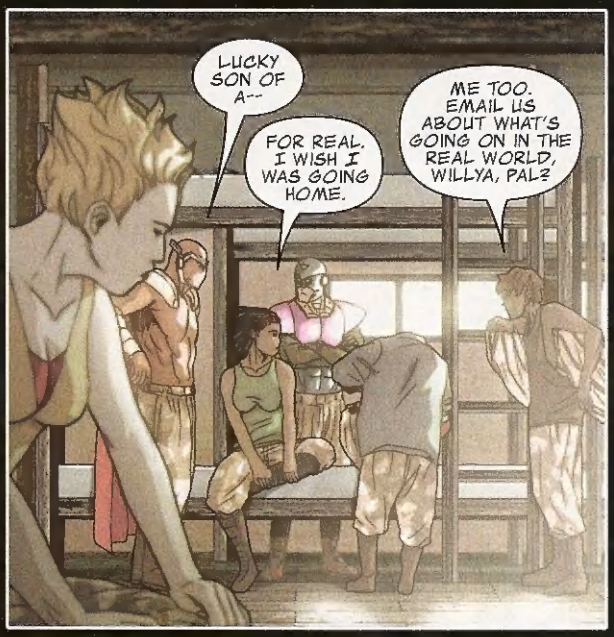
BUT I HAVE TO SAY, TEAM...
...YOU IMPRESSED ME TONIGHT.
WAY TO GO, BIG BUDDY...YOU'RE A HERO!
ME?
WOW.

The Next Morning.
WELL, WE'VE MADE UP OUR MIND, EMERY...

...WE'RE SENDING YOU HOME.
IT'S NOT. WE JUST FEEL IT'S WHAT'S BEST. FOR US AND FOR YOU.
BUT...IF THIS IS ABOUT LEAVING CAMP--
BUT THE FIGHT... I THOUGHT I...

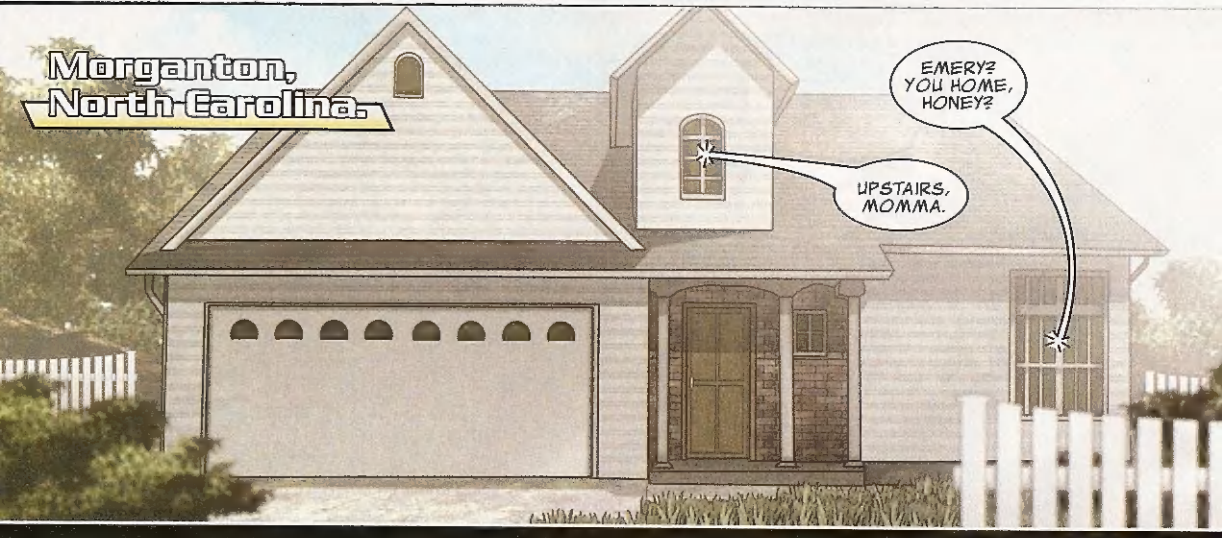
NO OFFENSE, BUT IT WAS PLAIN YOU WERE LOST OUT THERE. WE JUST GOT LUCKY THAT THE MAULER CHOSE YOU AS HIS HOSTAGE.
NO REFLECTION ON YOU, SON. SOME PEOPLE HAVE THE MINDSET FOR MILITARY SERVICE. FOR COMBAT... AND SOME DON'T.
YOU HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE IN SEARCH-AND-RESCUE, HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT EXPLORATION, ANY NUMBER OF FIELDS. JUST NOT WITH THE INITIATIVE.

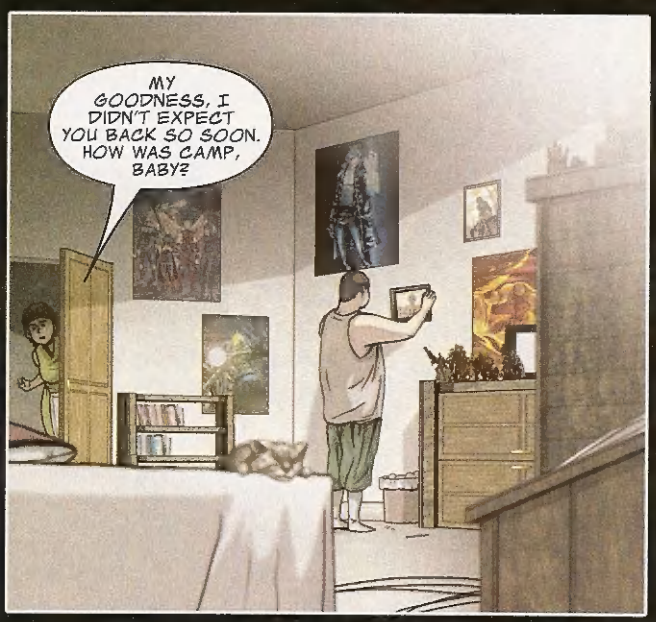
DON'T WORRY-- YOU'LL BE GIVEN I.D. STATING YOU'RE IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGISTRATION ACT.
YOU GET TO GO HOME. GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE. CONGRATULATIONS, SON.


LUCKY SON OF A--
FOR REAL. I WISH I WAS GOING HOME.
ME TOO. EMAIL US ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE REAL WORLD, WILLYA, PAL?

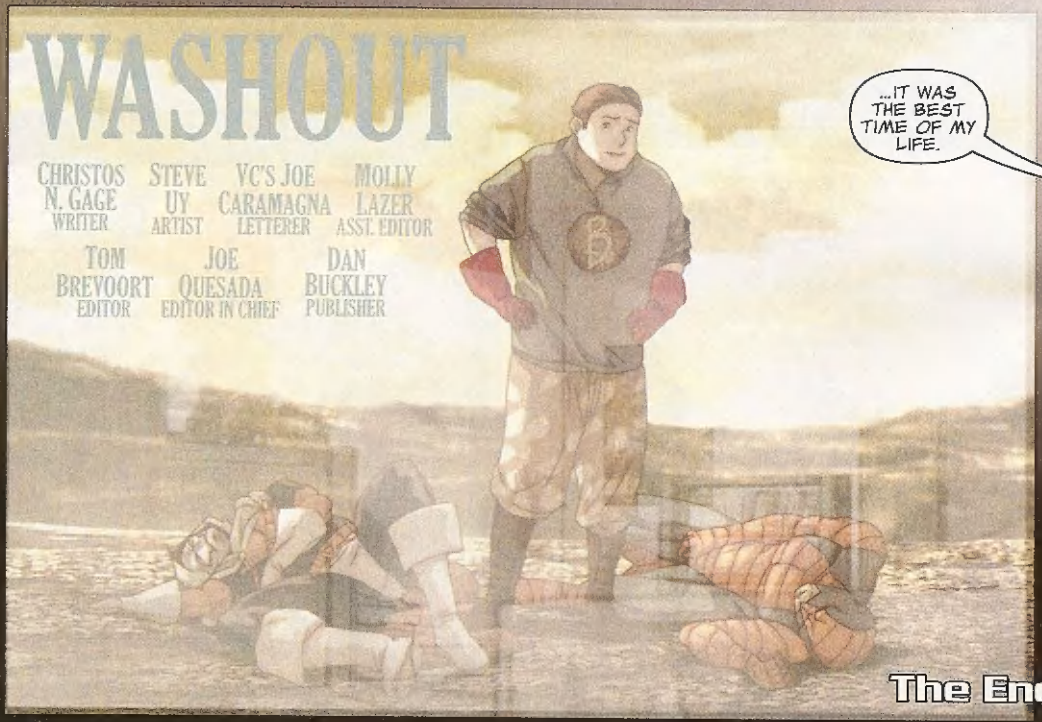
THEY DON'T GET IT. NONE OF 'EM.
I GOT BEAT BY THE NEW WARRIORS ONCE. YOU?
HAWKEYE AND ANT-MAN. TELL ANYONE AND I'LL KILL YOU.
LIKEWISE. OKAY...LET'S DO THIS.

HEY, KID. BEFORE YOU GO, WE GOT UNFINISHED BUSINESS.


Morganton, North Carolina.
EMERY? YOU HOME, HONEY?
UPSTAIRS, MOMMA.


MY GOODNESS, I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU BACK SO SOON. HOW WAS CAMP, BABY?

MOMMA...


WASHOUT
CHRISTOS N. GAGE WRITER
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MOLLY LAZER ASST. EDITOR
TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
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...IT WAS THE BEST TIME OF MY LIFE.
The End